



**IIT KANPUR**

**ENG122 - Introduction to Linguistics**

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**Mid Sem Assignment**

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## **ENG122: Introduction to Linguistics**

### **Mid-Semester Assignment**

**Total Marks- 20**

**Word limit- 800-1000 words**

**Turn-over deadline- 20/10/2020 (8:00 p.m.)**

Since the invention of the Internet in 1962 when... the first recorded description of the social interactions that could be enabled through networking... social media has gained a lot of prominence and momentum in the dissemination of information. Prior to the dawn of the Internet age other communication tools like the telegraph, telephone, radio, and computer had served as precursors. A tool of immeasurable capabilities, the Internet is also a medium for collaboration and interaction between individuals and their computers without regard for geographic location.

SMS allow for text messages that violate established grammatical and orthographic conventions. Users create words with little or no regard to norm. This accounts for the creation of acronyms and words in such a way that comprehension is hindered if one is not an “initiate”. Linguistic analyses of text messages reveal an irregularity in the shortening and creation of words. Although WhatsApp allows unlimited writing space to its writers unlike the SMS... birth of the former may have conditioned the way people write WhatsApp messages... the abbreviations and neologisms may be as a result of time factor. Sometimes as the writer is on his message the recipient is aware and thus waiting anxiously to have it. This process definitely affects how the messages are written.

(Yong & Kris-Ogbodo, 2009)

In light of the observations made above, answer the following questions-

Q1. List the neologisms (new words/terminology) found in your spoken/text language with your peers. (5 marks)

Q2. Why do you think the answers listed above are neologisms? Describe the morphological (for individual words) and syntactic (in phrases, sentences) processes. (5 marks)

Q3. Many people consider the text/whatsapp language as impure or corrupting. Many language teachers scoff at the idea of language used on social media, fearing that it will distort students' language in the long run. What are your views about the language of social media when it comes to issues like neologisms, language mixing etc? Do you agree that language of the internet will corrupt the standard languages like English or Hindi or Telugu? Provide your reasons with examples. (10 marks)

Ans1. With regard to the English Language, some of the Neologisms commonly used are :-

- **Tweet** – (Act of posting something on ‘Twitter’ is now commonly used as a verb in English)
  - **Widget** – (A combination of a program window and gadget)
  - **Romcom** – (Romantic Comedy)
  - **Netizen** – (Combination of Internet and Citizen)
  - **Google** – (A search engine getting so much rooted into the culture that the very act of searching is now-a-days being referred as Googling)
  - **Hinglish** – (Modern day usage of English and Hindi simultaneously in a communication without much distinction)
  - **Captcha** – (A verification method to distinguish between humans and computers)
  - **Indipop** – (Indian + Popular)
  - **Asap** – (An abbreviation for ‘as soon as possible’)
  - **Zoombombing** – (Unwanted and disruptive intrusion over a video call especially over ‘Zoom’ )
  - **Vlog** – (Video + Blog)
  - **Webinar** – (Seminar conducted over the World Wide Web)
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Ans2. Reasons for the above-mentioned words being categorised as Neologisms are discussed below: -

- **Tweet** – The word ‘Tweet’ was initially very specific to ‘Twitter’ but as the platform gained immense popularity, people started using it as if it is a part of conventional English. ‘Tweet’ is a specific feature on ‘Twitter’ and thus a Noun but now-a-days, it is used as a Verb. The morphological process involved here is ‘**Conversion**’ which involves the idea of **Zero Derivative**.
- **Widget** – Widget is a common word in the language of the technical community. People refer Widget to the on-screen gadget windows which are used to perform various tasks. For example, Clock Widget on home screen. Widget is a blend of ‘**Window + Gadget**’ and the morphological process is **Blending**.
- **Romcom** – This has emerged as a common word in the language of Cinema. Romcom refers to a genre of movies and other entertainment that involve Romance and Comedy and thus the word Romcom (**Romance + Comedy**). Morphological Process involved here is **Blending**.
- **Netizen** – The word ‘Netizen’ is used by Digital Creators, Bloggers and Journalists to refer to people on the Internet. They use sentences such as ‘Netizens went on hailing the action’. Netizen is a combination of ‘**Internet + Citizen**’. Morphological process is **Blending**.
- **Google** – This highly common word is a proof how deep impact a business model can have on its consumers. Google, initially a tech company has went on to become so popular that people started using ‘Google’ to refer any act of searching on the Internet. Morphological process used is **Conversion**.

- **Hinglish-** Hinglish is not an official language in the list of all the languages available out there. It is an informal way of referring to simultaneous and indistinct usage of Hindi and English both in a sentence during spoken conversation. This word is a blend of '**Hindi + English**'. Morphological process used is **Blending**.
  - **Captcha-** The word 'Captcha' is an acronym for '**Completely Automated Public Turing test to tell Computers and Humans Apart**'. Morphological process used in this case is '**Acronym**'
  - **Indipop-** This word is again an example of '**Blending**' word formation process. It is made up of '**Indian + Popular**' and refers to popular Independent Indian music.
  - **Asap-** '**Asap**' refers to '**As soon as possible**'. This is a common short form in textual conversation. Morphological process involved here is '**Acronym**'.
  - **Zoombombing-** It's a blend of '**Zoom**' and '**Bombing**'. This refers to unwanted and disruptive intrusion, especially in a Zoom Call. Word formation process used is **Blending**.
  - **Vlog-** This word refers to a Blog that has been made via a video. Online Vlogging is now-a-days a popular trend and thus this word is gaining wide popularity. Vlog is a blend of '**Video + Blog**'. Morphological process used is **Blending**.
  - **Webinar-** This refers to online seminars that are getting very popular now-a-days. The word is made up of '**Web+Seminar**'. Morphological process used is **Blending**.
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Ans3. With our lives running at ever fast speed, there is an ever-increasing demand of more effectiveness and productivity among individuals. Workplaces and firms are requiring their employees to work in multiple shifts during the day simultaneously meeting their efficiency expectations. Though this has seriously degraded the quality of individual life, people have come with shortcuts to get their work done in less time. This fundamental concept of short cuts is the root reason in my opinion why the language of social media has evolved to what it is now. To be more precise, individuals constantly try to get their message delivered at minimal cost. We constantly find them using acronyms and shorter form of words to send their message over the social media. Some of the commonly used examples of chat language slang and other words are: - "Wai, le me chck", "you comin tmrw?", "bruhh!", "GM", "jk", "idts" and many more.

Now following features can be instantly observed from the examples given: -

- 1- No fixed use of capitalization.
- 2- No proper use of punctuation.
- 3- Deliberate shortening of words to form acronyms ('Good Morning' changed to 'GM')
- 4- Deliberate striking off of letters and sounds to change spelling and often incorrect ('tomorrow' changed to 'tmrw', 'brother' changed to 'bruh')

These are just a small set of examples out of an ever fast growing dictionary of Slang and short words. In fact, modern day people go to extreme limits sometimes so that it gets almost impossible for an expert author of Conventional language to comprehend what people are talking about. As this trend of chat language is being taken to extremes, its natural to see conventional language speakers and language teachers to frown and scoff at the idea of chat language. It's just like the way how orthodox people react to modern culture and regard it as demeaning. Here the point is not about culture itself but regarding an aspect of culture i.e.

language. I would like to highlight some of the arguments given by conventional language experts in their favour: -

- 1- Chat language is corrupt and destroying the very beauty and essence of “pure” language.
- 2- Deliberate usage of short forms and misspelled words is not efficiency but a sign of being ignorant.
- 3- Newer and newer generation is going away from “pure” language as they are getting born at a time when people have already internalised some of the chat words in their day-to-day life. New people are born with the notion that these slangs are a part of their language just like any other conventional word and thus, find nothing unusual, opposite to conventional thinkers of language.
- 4- Chat Language is just a starting. As these chat slangs are getting more internalised in the modern-day societies, people will start using them in the spoken form. Days are not far when we will find someone saying “idts” as a response to someone asking him/her about the chances of a particular stock going high or not and the questioner in puzzles.

I am also somewhat a critic of uncontrolled usage of chat language. Keeping those words limited to textual conversation seems absolutely fine to me but alas! they won't be limited till there. People have already started incorporating chat language in normal spoken conversation (if not too much till now). I am of the opinion that although new word coinage is a natural human tendency but deliberately removing few letters out of an already coined word and then using it extensively as a replacement to the original word is not coinage.

A bizarre situation will be around at a time when a whole generation will find saying “Lol” as a more natural response to a sarcasm instead of really laughing at it. Imagine a situation that you are heading to your workplace and every other person you encounter is throwing streams of “GMs” at you. What it will be like when everyone will say “+1” and not “I consent” to something they agree with.

People may find my words as exaggeration of the situation which does appear at the first look just like it may have appeared as a wild imagination of a creator in 90s to project a time when everyone will be clinged to some metal/ plastic boxes and use deliberate misspelled words out of fashion to communicate. Even some modern day authors of the language have started using Social Media slangs (not misspelled words as far as I know) in their books.

I propose controlled usage of Chat Language (which is very difficult in the time of Internet) so as to not create a situation where chat-like expressions are seen as more natural expression then using the real word. Now no one has the authority to control what someone will speak and what they will not. I totally concede to this fact. But at least, some research work is to be done in this field of chat language (which I firmly believe is already being done and should be taken to a more extensive scale) and present the information, pros and cons in the public domain.

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